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MISSIONARY SURVEYS

A SERIES OF PAMPHLETS DESCRIBING
THE VARIOUS MISSION FIELDS OF THE
AMERICAN BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY
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NUMBER 2 BENGAL-ORISSA

THE BENGAL-ORISSA MISSION

1. The Country

THE Bengal-Orissa Mission lies in two Indian provinces and comprises two districts, Midnapore in the Province of Bengal, and Balasore in the Province of Bihar and Orissa. This mission, formerly the Free Baptist Mission, is now under the direction of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society through the merging in 1911 of the missionary work of Free Baptists and Baptists. The Midnapore district begins at the Hooghly River near Calcutta and extends one hundred and fifty miles along the Bay of Bengal, to the south-west. A small part lying along the Hooghly River, comprising Tamluk, has been ceded to the Methodists as their field. The Balasore district is south of the Midnapore and extends one hundred miles further south. A large part of the district west of Balasore, known as the Morbhanj, also properly belongs to this division, as our missionaries tour through it, and no other mission is working the territory, except at one remote part.

The whole area is more than seven thousand square miles, with a population exceeding four millions. Midnapore and Balasore are the largest cities in their districts, having 34,000

and 22,000 inhabitants respectively. There are on the average of three small villages to every two square miles, with more than 500 inhabitants to a square mile. Rice is the main crop. Others of less importance are peas, beans, sweet potatoes, bananas, mangoes, cotton, sugar cane, tobacco and oil seeds. The northern boundary of the field is less than twenty-three degrees north of the equator.

2. The People

Most of the population are Hindus, with a large admixture of Mohammedans, especially in the Midnapore district. In the northwest, chiefly among the hills, is an aboriginal tribe, the Santals, numbering 150,000. Four languages are spoken: Bengali in the Midnapore district; Oriya in the Balasore district, and the Morbhanj: Hindi largely by the Mohammedans and Santali by the Santals. The mission work is conducted almost exclusively through Bengali in the north and Oriya in the south. Even the Santals are reached through the Bengali, as the government requires that all school instruction be given in Bengali. Caste restrictions are rigorously observed. Women are largely secluded. Girls are betrothed and married and sometimes become widows before entering their teens. This practice of child marriage, however, is slowly being abolished wherever Christian teaching has taken hold.

3. Mission Work

The mission was opened in 1836. Rev. Amos Sutton, a missionary of the English Baptists at Puri, near Cuttack, 200 miles southwest of Calcutta, had married the widow of James Coleman, one of Adoniram Judson's early associates in Burma. Mr. and Mrs. Sutton desired helpers. Mrs. Sutton, an American Baptist, supposed her own people had all they could care for in maintaining the mission in Burma, but suggested to her husband that possibly the Free Baptists might be enlisted in missionary enterprise. He wrote a letter addressed to Free Baptists, designed for publication in the Morning Star, but not knowing the address of this newspaper, he pigeonholed the letter and it lay forgotten several months,

until a package came from England wrapped in an old copy of the Morning Star with the desired address. The letter was quickly despatched across the sea.

That letter was printed in the Morning Star April 13, 1832. As a result, in the following January the Free Will Baptist Foreign Mission Society was organized: in 1834 Mr. and Mrs. Sutton left India on furlough, and came to America. For a year Mr. Sutton served as the corresponding secretary of the new society, and a fund of nearly $3,000 was raised. Mr. Sutton addressed his brethren of the Baptist churches, and won their support also for the work in India, so that when he and his wife sailed from Boston in September, 1835, there sailed with them Rev. and Mrs. Jeremiah Phillips and Rev. and Mrs. Eli Noyes, representing Free Baptists, and Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Stearns Day, representing Baptists, the latter to begin that famous and successful work among the Telugus of South India.

In the beginning, therefore, Baptist and Free Baptist missionary work in India was indissolubly linked through an English Baptist and his American wife and a chain of circumstances which must be recognized as providential.

4. The Stations

MIDNAPORE is seventy miles west of Calcutta, and in addition to regular evangelistic and zenana work, a boys' school, a girls' school and a Bible school for the training of native preachers, are maintained.

BHIMPORE, twenty miles northwest of Midnapore, is a station for Santals. Besides schools for boys and girls and much outstation work, there is the Sterling Memorial Hospital.

KHARAGPUR is an important railroad town rapidly growing. An English church for Eurasians is prosperous, and the work for natives, who come in large numbers from various parts of India, is particularly promising, because the people so largely break loose from the fetters of caste in their new surroundings.

CONTAI is situated in a densely populated region. It is a strategic center for evangelistic work and has some primary schools and a dispensary.

JELLASORE, with a woman missionary in residence, is now the center of several village schools and some outstation work.

SANTIPORE has schools for boys and girls, an industrial school where weaving, carpentry and iron work are taught; a dispensary, a native village founded on socialistic principles and extensive evangelistic features.

BALASORE is the seat of a large high school for boys, an industrial school giving instruction in gardening, carpentry, iron work and book-binding, a large kindergarten, primary grade schools for both boys and girls, orphanages for both boys and girls, a widows' home, one book-room and strong evangelistic work.

BHADRAK has no resident missionary at present; its work is confined chiefly to a primary school and the itinerating efforts of native Bible women and preachers and is under the supervision of missionaries in Balasore.

CHANDBALI, also without a missionary, has a station school and evangelistic work under native supervision. It is part of the Balasore field.

The churches have a membership of 1,500. There are many trustworthy native workers; churches and schools are maintained in several outstations and important centers should soon be occupied by missionary families. High school boys come to the missionaries freely to talk about Jesus and in some stations the missionaries open their homes to the boys for prayer and song service on Sunday evenings. Attendance is voluntary, but large, as the boys greatly appreciate the privilege. Most mission school students show great earnestness and consideration of Christian decisions.

Bengal-Orissa Literature

Bengal-Orissa: Missionary Surveys	Price $ .01
History of Our Indian Mission Field	Free
Missions in Bengal-Orissa	.10
The Guide Book	.25

Catalog giving list of general literature on Bengal-Orissa free. Annual Report of Society free on receipt of 10 cents to cover postage.

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